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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell,

As you know, Senator Leahy and I introduced the USA FREEDOM Act to reform the National Security Agency and strengthen Congressional oversight of the intelligence community. These reforms are a necessary response to NSA overreach and the unnecessary intrusion into the lives of innocent Americans.

While Senator Leahy and I both hold sacred the personal liberties afforded by the Constitution, neither of us are naïve to the threats we face as a nation. In my view, drafting and negotiating the FREEDOM Act has been less about balancing freedom and security than about recognizing that neither freedom nor security should be compromised. The FREEDOM Act is a legislative solution that recognizes this truth.

That we succeeded is evident from the bill's supporters. The FREEDOM Act is backed by liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. More importantly, it has the support of both the intelligence community and the country's staunchest privacy advocates. In a letter to Senator Leahy, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and Attorney General Eric Holder wrote, "the Intelligence Community believes that [the FREEDOM Act] preserves essential Intelligence Community capabilities; and the Department of Justice and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence support your bill and believe that it is a reasonable compromise that enhances privacy and civil liberties and increases transparency."

Senator Leahy's most recent draft, which I fully endorse, has the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Democracy and Technology, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and countless other privacy advocates and technology companies.

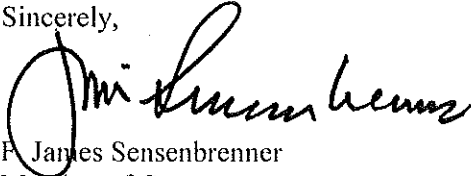
This coming together of the intelligence community and privacy advocates is historic.

It would be a critical mistake not to take advantage of this coalition. Without Congressional action, Section 215 of the PATRIOT Act will sunset next June. Many privacy advocates believe they will have increased leverage next year as the sunset approaches. Some of their proposed reforms, however, are

redlines for the Administration. As a result, there is no guarantee that the coalition we built can be rebuilt. The cost could be losing privacy protections, improved transparency, and important intelligence gathering tools.

The House has already passed the USA FREEDOM Act. I urge the Senate to follow suit. It is past time to secure the Constitutional rights of American citizens and restore the country's faith in its intelligence community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. James Sensenbrenner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "F".

F. James Sensenbrenner
Member of Congress